



Truth For These Times



50A. TONGUE'S SPEAKING

In his book "Glossolalia", Rene Noorbergen tells how he entered a church in Memphis, Tennessee and heard a young man speaking in a way he had never heard before. "Shamma shamma oh amatala" etc. As the young man continued, Noorbergen asked himself, "Is this a language?" Those listening responded with subdued cries of ecstasy; raised their arms in the air with repeated statements of "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!" Is this what happened at Pentecost when the gift of tongues was given?

In our modern day speaking in tongues is quite common. The meetings are usually charged with emotion and excitement. At times people swoon, scream, cry, moan, shout, sway and utter terms like sweet Jesus in tenderest tones. Some meetings are bedlam and extreme to sensitive people, while others are more subdued and appeal to the average churchgoer. In theory, all 'tongues' messages should be interpreted but some people have their own private tongues session at home. Interpretations are given by any speaker who, though not understanding the tongue, feels he is being guided to give the correct interpretation.

Speaking in tongues is said to be a thrilling experience, leaving the person with a feeling of walking on air and loving everybody – everything is wonderful. But as the effect wears off a further experience is required to maintain the emotional high. Some who have ceased speaking in tongues, because they believe this ecstatic utterance to be a false manifestation of the true gift of tongues, liken the situation to drug addiction with exactly the same effects.

THE ORIGIN OF TONGUES

Speaking in tongues goes back as far as 1100 B.C. when a young Amon worshipper was said to be possessed of a god and began to emit sounds in a strange ecstatic "tongue." Seven hundred years later, the Greek philosopher Plato made mention of the 'gift' in his time. He referred to several families who practised the ecstatic speech. He further pointed out that these practises also brought about physical healing. In the last century before Christ, Virgil, the Sybilline priestess on the Island of Delos, attributed her ecstatic tongues to the result of her being unified with the god Apollo. Members of the Hare Krishna movement report an ecstatic experience through repetitiously chanting the name of their god. Yogi Maharishi Mahesh taught the Beatles the way to 'serenity, joyfulness and the expansion of consciousness' by the repetition of one word – (WHICH MUST BE MEANINGLESS).



Tongues speaking originated in paganism, NOT Christianity.

We can see clearly that tongue speaking does not have its origin in Christianity. It has been used by the great deceiver of souls in pagan worship.

TONGUES IN SCRIPTURE

Is there not the genuine gift of tongues in the Bible? Yes there is. What is the difference between the true and the false?

1. TONGUES No. 1 Is an ecstatic utterance not following any known language. It is composed of non-sense syllables. It appears to be a state of emotionalism, involving a form of self-hypnosis.
2. TONGUES No. 2 Is the Bible gift given to certain followers of Jesus for the purpose of spreading the gospel to foreign countries. This 'tongues', is a definite foreign language.

Acts 2:1-8

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **BEGAN TO SPEAK WITH OTHER TONGUES**, as the Spirit gave them utterance.



And there were **DWELLING IN JERUSALEM JEWS, DEVOUT MEN, FROM EVERY NATION UNDER HEAVEN**. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because **EVERYONE HEARD THEM SPEAK IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE**. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And **HOW IS IT THAT WE HEAR, EACH IN OUR OWN LANGUAGE IN WHICH WE WERE BORN?**"

The gift of tongues here at Pentecost was used to bring many to Jesus Christ. It was also evidence to the unbelieving Jewish nation that this message was of God. Without question this gift of tongues was real languages. It was a fulfillment of Mark 16:17,18 where Jesus said that speaking in tongues would be a sign that Jesus' followers were preaching truth. At Pentecost these devout men heard the gospel of Jesus in their own language. Understanding the message, they were thus able to spread the good news upon returning to their homeland. The many nationalities represented are mentioned in Acts 2:9-11.

The gift of languages given to the disciples was the actual ability for them to speak in various new languages. Verse 4 says, "Began to speak with other tongues." They were real languages as verse 6 states, "everyone heard them speak in his own language."



The gift of tongues crossed language barriers to preach the gospel more quickly.

"The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were labouring ... From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple and accurate, whether they spoke in their natural tongue or in a foreign language." *Acts of the Apostles*, page 39&40.

Acts 10:45,46

And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. **FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAK WITH TONGUES AND MAGNIFY GOD.**

Here the gift of tongues is evident for the first time among the Gentiles – proving to the skeptical Jewish Christians that the gospel is for Gentiles also.

Acts 11:15-17 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, AS UPON US AT THE BEGINNING. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, “John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” If therefore GOD GAVE THEM THE SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE US when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?

These tongues were real languages, because Peter, in recounting the incident testifies, “the Holy Spirit fell upon them, *as upon us at the beginning*” verse 15; and also, “God gave them the *same gift as He gave us*” verse 17. The gift of tongues at Pentecost was real foreign languages and now the Gentiles were given the same gift. In Acts 19:1-7 the same word for “tongues” is used as in Acts 2 and Acts 10, making it obvious that the gift of foreign languages is evident all the way through and in no way is referring to a different kind of tongues speaking.



Paul rebukes Corinth for their falling away.

TONGUES IN CORINTH

The city of Corinth was wealthy, and wicked to the extreme. High on the Acropolis, overlooking Corinth was the magnificent temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and fertility. One thousand priestesses practiced the trade of prostitution as a part of the religious rites. Corinth was also a city of vice where longhaired male prostitutes were a common sight.

The church of Corinth, instead of holding evil in check, was overcome by it, but even so came behind in no spiritual gift, (1 Cor.1:7) yet they tolerated immorality in their midst (1 Cor.5:1). Some of them were even involved with prostitutes (1 Cor.6:15,16). Heresy was infiltrating the church (1 Cor.15:12). They were suing each other in the courts (1 Cor.6:7). Furthermore there was division among them (1 Cor.1:12). Paul is writing to a broken church upon whom he had laboured a great deal. The Corinthian church was charismatic (gifted), yet was arrested in its spiritual development because of its immoral living and heretical doctrine; even so there were still faithful members in the church (1 Cor.6:10,11).

ANALYSIS OF TONGUES IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14



The Corinthians were misusing the gift of tongues.

Read the whole chapter. In this study we will refer to the main texts only.

Verse 2 FOR HE WHO SPEAKS IN A TONGUE DOES NOT SPEAK TO MEN, BUT TO GOD, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

The gift of tongues in this chapter is quite different from that in Acts 2. The genuine gift of tongues had been bestowed upon them but was being used for personal praise, rather than to bring others of foreign language to Christ, which was the main purpose of the gift. The real purpose of tongues speaking was being lost sight of.

When the word “tongue” is used, it refers to a foreign language used and spoken by some people group on earth. In Corinth, the tongue was unknown to those present, but not those who could understand the language being spoken. It is therefore true that God understood the speaker, (God understands all languages), but those present would not. The idea that the tongue is a language unknown by any on earth is without foundation, and cannot be substantiated from the Bible. The “mysteries” here referred to, speaks of the “mystery” of the gospel (1 Cor.2:7; Eph.6:19).

Verse 3 & 4 **BUT HE WHO PROPHESES SPEAKS EDIFICATION** and exhortation and comfort to men. **HE WHO SPEAKS IN A TONGUE EDIFIES HIMSELF**, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

When the Scriptures are opened, read and applied, those listening gain a blessing. Prophesying refers to teaching and instruction whether from a pastor or prophet or layman. The main burden of Paul in this chapter is to edification of the church. The tongue speaking was failing on this point. The speaker was the only one who understood, so was the only one edified.

Verse 5 **I WISH YOU ALL SPOKE WITH TONGUES**, but even more that you prophesied; for **HE WHO PROPHESES IS GREATER** than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

No one could appreciate more than Paul the value of having several foreign languages at his command. He was the “apostle to the Gentiles” and needed his gift of languages to communicate with varying nationalities. He upholds the gift of tongues, but clearly makes his point, that only what is understood will edify the church.



The gift of tongues was not for self-edification but for sharing the gospel and edifying of the church.

Verses 6 & 9 **But now, brethren, IF I COME TO YOU SPEAKING WITH TONGUES, WHAT SHALL I PROFIT YOU** unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?...So likewise you, **UNLESS YOU UTTER BY THE TONGUE WORDS EASY TO UNDERSTAND**, how will it be known what is spoken? For **YOU WILL BE SPEAKING INTO THE AIR**.

Paul is saying that if they don’t understand what he says he has not helped them, and if they do the same, they “will be speaking into the air”. (i.e. The words are lost, having benefited nobody at all). Both the speaker and the hearer must know the meaning of the voice.

Verse 12 & 13 **Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH** that you seek to excel. Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue **PRAY THAT HE MAY INTERPRET**.

Some modern tongue exponents tell of the self-edification, non-intelligible ecstatic utterance provides. They speak of an experience like an electrical current flooding the body with overpowering emotion. Here Paul is not advocating self-edification but “edification of the church”. The true Christian life is one of service – not self-seeking. True Christianity is faith in Christ – not feelings – not emotionalism. Emotional feelings should be present in the Christian life, but they must be under the guiding hand of faith and the Word of God. Those who trust feeling alone are easily deceived. Why? Because our feelings are unreliable – they change like the wind. If a person does speak in church in a foreign language, Paul says, “Pray that he may interpret”.

Verse 18 & 19

I thank my God I SPEAK WITH TONGUES MORE THAN YOU ALL; yet in the church I would RATHER SPEAK FIVE WORDS WITH MY UNDERSTANDING, that I may teach others also, THAN TEN THOUSAND WORDS IN A TONGUE.



Paul said – better to speak five understandable words than to speak 10,000 non-understandable words.

Paul could speak several languages, but he never used them where they were not needed. He held to this rule. He would rather speak five words with his hearers understanding him than 10,000 in a foreign tongue. There is no room here for putting the mind in neutral and letting the tongue idle on!

Verse 22

Therefore TONGUES ARE FOR A SIGN, NOT TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE BUT TO UNBELIEVERS; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

Tongues were never designed for believers. Believers do not need them to receive a knowledge of the gospel. Here Paul makes it quite clear, that where one's native tongue is understood, the use of foreign languages is unnecessary and even discouraged.

Verses 26-33

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. LET ALL THINGS BE DONE FOR EDIFICATION. If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But IF THERE IS NO INTERPRETER, LET HIM KEEP SILENT IN CHURCH, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.



God is not the author of confusion. No tongue was to be spoken in worship that could not be interpreted.

Here the apostle appeals for a reasonable service of worship. Everything is to be done for the edifying of the entire church body. His concern is for comprehension. Never is more than one person at a time permitted to speak under Paul's formula. Furthermore Paul states emphatically, "If there be no interpreter, let him *keep silent* in church". God is not the author of confusion (verse 33). The Greek word here for confusion means "tumult or unquietness". The atmosphere of worship should be orderly and quiet, not noisy or unruly. When we worship God in the church

we should be happy, but even so we come into His presence in awe – not in the frivolity of the world. The true Bible gift of tongues has its place and it should not be forbidden, but in God's church "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verse 40).

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Is speaking in tongues the baptism of the Holy Spirit? No it is not. In 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 we read of the gifts of the Spirit. Tongues are the *last* gift on the list, then the question is asked: “Do all speak with tongues?” The answer is obviously *no*, because each person receives different gifts. See 1 Corinthians 12:10.

How do we receive the Holy Spirit? Galatians 3:14 says, “That we might receive the promise of *the Spirit through faith*”. When we believe – when we accept Jesus as our Saviour – when we are converted – we receive the Holy Spirit. Also, the Holy Spirit is given only to those who obey God and keep His commandments (Acts 5:32).



The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God and keep His commandments.

The Bible frequently speaks of people being filled with the Holy Spirit. Here are some examples. John the Baptist – Luke 1:15. Zacharias – Luke 1:67. Jesus – Luke 3:22. Stephen – Acts 7:55. The Samaritan believers – Acts 8:14-17. Saul – Acts 9:17. In none of these cases of the infilling of the Holy Spirit did these persons speak in tongues. How do we know whether a person has the Holy Spirit? Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt.7:16). What is the fruit of the Spirit? “Love, joy, peace” etc. Galatians 5:22,23. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in the life is not whether a person speaks in tongues or not, but whether his life demonstrates the fruits of the Spirit.

AN EVALUATION

During the past few years, linguists who are internationally known experts have studied hundreds of tapes of tongues speaking. One such person is Dr. William J Samarin, professor of anthropology and linguistics at the University of Toronto. The experts’ evaluation was that in ***not one case has the taped sample proved to be a foreign language or even a language at all!*** Tongue speaking is fundamentally *not* language – it reflects no kind of communicative system. Even a heavenly language, if it is translatable, must show something of the characteristics of language, as we know it. God is not irrational.

Many of these tapes have been submitted to various “tongues interpreters” but it was found that each interpreter had a different interpretation for the same message. Under close investigation truth always shines, but here we see an exposure of error. Ecstatic tongues have failed the test. They are the counterfeit of the true Bible gift. What a pity that so many who are looking for something in life fall into the trap of emotionalism – a deceptive substitute for faith. People are depending on a feeling – an experience – rather than a “Thus saith the Lord”.



Speaking in ecstatic utterances does not agree with the Scripture.

Ellen White writes in *Testimonies*, Vol.1, page 412:

“Some of these persons have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver. Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts that God has placed in the church. Some have been deceived here.”

Speaking in tongues in ecstatic utterance is not according to Scripture. It is a perversion of the genuine gift given by God at Pentecost. There are many deceptions in the world today – this is one

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of them. There are, no doubt, many genuine Christians who are caught up in the snare of the Pentecostal or Charismatic movements. God wants each one to see the truth as it is in Jesus and depart from this dangerous trap. He wants you to walk in the way of truth so that you may one day walk in God's eternal kingdom.

Review Sheet – Tongues Speaking

ASSIGNMENT – Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. What are the two types of tongues under question today?

Answer _____

2. What is the purpose of the gift of tongues at Pentecost? Acts 2:1-8

Answer _____

3. In reasoning with the church at Corinth how did Paul explain the futility of speaking a language not understood by the members? 1 Corinthians 14:9

Unless you utter _____
for _____

4. What was Paul's aim in writing 1 Corinthians 14? (verses 12 & 13)

For the _____.

How does he explain the importance of being understood? (verses 18 & 19)

Answer _____

5. To whom are tongues a sign? (verse 22)

Answer _____

How does Paul sum up the tongues situation? Explain why. (verses 26-33)

Answer _____

6. Speaking in tongues is said to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit. How does the Bible say we receive the Holy Spirit? Galatians 3:14

That we might receive _____

Can you see the difference between true and false tongues? YES _____ NO _____

Have you determined to put your trust in God's Word? YES _____ NO _____